

document the work and accomplishments of the court. Committed, organized, people-focused staff who are willing to enforce policies and procedures provide the internal structure for Family Court.

2. One Judge/One Family describes the assigning of a single judge to a family whether that family is in domestic court for a divorce, in juvenile court for abuse, neglect or dependency issues, in domestic violence court for assault charges, or in delinquency court for a truant or criminally-involved youth. The Family Court judge and his/her assigned case coordinator manage all issues of one family's case assigned to that judge for the life of the case. A concern from the legal community may be that the assigned judge will be too familiar with the case and not as impartial. However, having all of the pertinent information about a family allows Family Court judges to better address the family's multiple needs, and judges will continue to recuse themselves from a case when they feel they may be unfairly biased.

A significant benefit of the one judge/one family case assignment is that a judge assumes ownership of each case assigned to him/her. Efficient processing of cases toward resolution becomes a critical part of how judges approach each scheduled event. Working in concert with their case coordinator, the Family Court team becomes responsible for ensuring that every case progresses through each stage to resolution in a timely manner. Continuances are no longer granted so that another judge will hear that difficult case later. For a Family Court judge, that case will remain on his or her calendar until that judge has dealt with the issues before the Court.

In some larger districts, chief judges assign judges and case coordinators to specific content areas, such as domestic cases only. In these cases, it becomes even more important that the case coordinator, immediately after filing of the case, searches any and all court data bases to identify "cross-over" cases, those families with more than one active case in a Family Court arena. For example, a couple involved in a divorce case may also have a child in delinquency court. A Family Court judge handling one part of the family's case pairs with a judge handling the other part of the case. Communication and coordination must occur as to how to proceed with each of the remaining pieces of the case. Should both cases be assigned to only one of the judges? Which part of the case takes precedence? What happens to the other part of the case while the primary issues are dealt with? What issues might this process generate for the family? What services, court or community, are available to support the family while they are in the court system? What procedures might need to be implemented in order to consistently address these kinds of cases? Family Court attempts to answer these difficult questions.

A frequent concern of judges is how long they will be in the Family Court rotation. National standards suggest a minimum of two years is necessary in order to have well trained, seasoned judges on the Family Court bench. Also, Family Court judges would say it takes a minimum of one year to revise their own approach to fit the new model and a second year to begin to feel a level of confidence and expertise that maximizes successful management of their case load.

Attorneys often ask "will I be able to choose my judge?" or "what happens if I'm stuck with a judge for the entire divorce case, for example, who is very good